

MEMORANDUM

December 15, 1958

TO: Mr. Nelson C. Jackson, Director
Community Services

FROM: Ray M. Harris

SUBJECT: Field Trip - Trenton and Bucks County,
December 10, and 11, 1958.

Purpose of Visit:

1. To determine status of employment at the Fairless Works plant of the United States Steel Company, at the point of its formal beginning of production.
2. To visit the main plants of the American Steel and Wire Company, a United States Steel subsidiary, determining the status of Negro employment and possible opportunities for improvements.

Background Information:

The new \$450,000,000. Fairless Works was scheduled to open for production on December 11th or 12th. Over the past several months I had been suggesting to Trentonians that competent Negro white collar and production workers apply at Fairless Works for jobs. The Superintendent of Industrial Relations at the plant had told me that as production would begin that there would be no discrimination in hiring, based on race, color or creed.

During the November 16th conference of top USS-NUL officials and representatives, Mr. Hood, Executive Vice-President, USS, made a wager with me that I would find fair employment practices quite satisfactory at the American Steel and Wire Company, of which he is a former president. Mr. Julius Thomas (NUL) was also wanting the latest detailed racial employment data on this firm.

Problems Presented:

Officials at Fairless Works have been quite impressed with the sum of importance with which the press and general community has surrounded this major United States Steel Company venture. Moreover, these officials have recognized the desire of a large number of social agencies and organizations in securing help from United States Steel Company on their respective interests. This creates a problem for the National Urban League in developing any satisfactory "open door" genuinely cooperative relationship at Fairless Works.

Action Taken:

Fairless Works:

The formal opening of the first production operation at Fairless Works was marked by ceremonies lasting more than two hours, and a full day of related officially directed activities. Some two hundred persons

were present, including members of the Company's Board of Directors, top officials of the firm and of selected governmental units, and the wives of those were invited. I was able only to talk with Mr. Paul Kelly, assistant to Mr. Alfred Burtis, Plant Superintendent - who, Mr. Kelly said, was up to his neck with ceremonial details.

Mr. Kelly took pains to explain to me that many hundreds of requests had been made to attend the opening ceremonies (including requests of many upper line staff members), and had to be turned down. Because of this, as well as pressures of assignments for the occasion, no official would be available to me for a conference on the opening employment situation.

I asked that my request for such a conference be placed on Mr. Burtis' desk for action on Friday or Monday, December 12th or 15th. Mr. Kelly suggested that I call back on Friday morning about 10:30 A.M. I returned to New York City on Thursday night, called Mr. Kelly at 10:30 A.M. Friday, and was told that he would advise me by mail, that he hadn't had a chance to see Mr. Burtis.

New Jersey State Employment Service, Trenton Office:

I conferred with the manager of the Trenton, N. J. State Employment Service office, Mr. Herbert H. Moor, regarding the effect on the Trenton labor market at the beginning of the Fairless Works' operation. Mr. Moore expressed grave concern about conditions he expects six months from now, but at this point he doesn't see any effect at all. He doesn't know any of the details regarding Fairless Works' hiring schedule or activities. He does know that National Tube is expected to begin hiring in January.

The Trenton, N. J., S.E.S. Office gets clearances (through the regular U.S.E.S. relationship) from Mr. Matthews, Manager of the Bristol (Pa.) P.S.E.S. Office. However, those clearances (to fill Fairless Works job-orders) are for skilled workers needed badly in Trenton itself - such as machinists, auto-mechanics, stenographers, etc. Mr. Moore doesn't believe USS will be able to pull many people off Trenton jobs. Trenton job-rates are high enough to make the switch unattractive for most workers. "Trenton construction (and road) laborers get \$1.69 per hour, while USS starting rates are as low as \$1.31." (According to facts in my hands USS starting rates are \$1.435 per hour.)

Bristol Pennsylvania State Employment Service:

Mr. Matthews, Manager, PSES Bristol Office, was away on a trip to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. According to his assistant, that office has requests from Fairless Works for highly skilled workers - machinists, etc. Very few referrals have been effected on such job orders. However, more than 500 people have been referred to Fairless Works for semi-skilled

jobs and machine operators. Extremely few Negroes have been among those referred.

Community Contacts:

By several reliable citizens I was told that three Negro girls have begun work at Fairless Works in clerical jobs. (Their names and addresses are being secured for me) Negroes in the area feel that any Negroes qualified for higher classification jobs at Fairless Works, will have to come from other areas.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Apparently, Fairless Works officials are being extremely careful to deal similarly with community social agencies or organizations. Fairless Works officials have not yet differentiated between the Urban League and other non-governmental social agencies. For easy access to plant officials in Morrisville, regarding racial integration, promotion and housing, it is imperative that we have the names and all necessary information about specific Negro prospects, employed or applying at Fairless Works.

1. I, therefore, suggest that the plan to confer with the President of the United Steelworkers Union, be activated at once. (This was a plan to seek intra-union efforts to locate and/or promote Negroes who are, or with one or two promotions, would be eligible for higher classifications of jobs at Fairless Works.
2. It seems important to go ahead with Mr. Ford, (UAW District #7) Executive Director, in Philadelphia, regarding District 7's support of the plan.
3. Because two conferences are promised (at American Steel and Wire Company and at Fairless Works) within the next week, I should return to the Bucks County field on the date set - hopefully the same date. On that trip a review should be made of Negro applicants for the Jim Crow section of Levittown and of other private housing in the area.

cc: Mr. Granger - Mr. Moss
Mr. Jackson
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Parris
Miss Tammayhill - Mr. Finley - Mr. Pope
Dr. Banner